

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (R-FL) met this week with the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Gen. Eric Shinseki.

Secretary Shinseki, a retired U.S. Army General appointed by President Barak Obama, appeared for the first time before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and outlined his vision for transforming the VA into a 21st Century organization serving our nation's veterans.

"Leadership, innovation, and initiative – those qualities are important if we are going to change the culture of the Department," Shinseki told the Committee. "We do many things well now, but there are also other things we can and must do better."

Following Wednesday's hearing, Buchanan congratulated the secretary on his appointment and encouraged the General to immediately address the nation's growing backlog of veterans' benefits claims.

"I look forward to working with Secretary Shinseki to address the needs of the more than 95,000 veterans in my congressional district," said Buchanan. "And I can't think of a need more important than ensuring that our Vets receive the health care and benefits they have so rightly earned."

Congressman Buchanan was recently awarded the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW) legislative achievement award by the Florida VFW for his service to members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families.